

Johnny Mack Brown

Comics

2/13





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California's Desert Posse

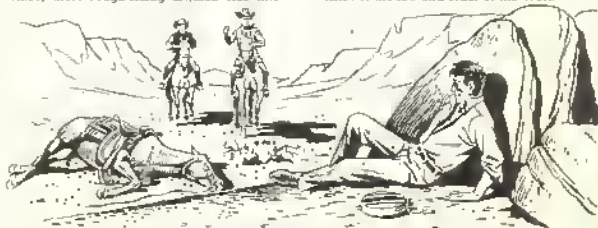


Throughout the remote and unsettled regions of the West, inaccessible by automobile, the law still takes to the saddle.

Typical of this is California's famed desert posse. From the San Bernardino Sheriff's office, these rough-riding lawmen ride into

the desert on the trail of outlaws, or to the rescue of persons lost in the burning heat.

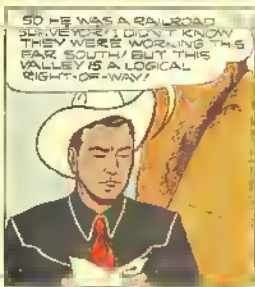
Though the years have brought with them many changes in western living, the mounted posse of armed lawmen is still of vital importance to the law and order of the West.

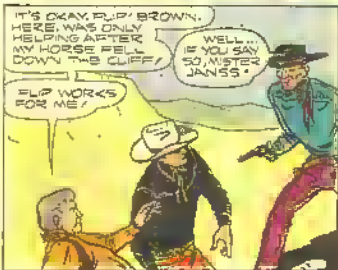
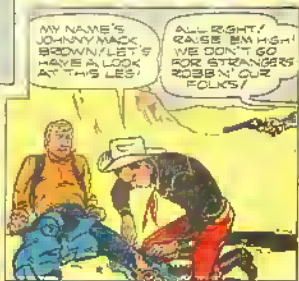
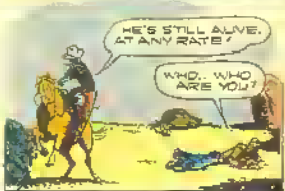


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AND -B'S BEEN KNIFED IN THE BACK! THE POOR FELLOW DON'T HAVE A CHANCE... BUT WHAT'S THIS?





WAIT A MINUTE... I ALMOST FORGOT! THERE'S A DEAD MAN AT THE TOP OF THE HILL... BETWEEN TWO RED ROCKS!

A DEAD MAN?

YES... I FOUND THIS IN HIS POCKET! HE WAS A RAILROAD SURVEYOR, THINK!

I DON'T KNOW NOTHING ABOUT IT! I'D BETTER GO FOR THE DOC!

SHORT TIME LATER...

A HORSE RANCH!... HE'S GOT SOME NICE STOCK, TOO!

FATHER! OH, FATHER!

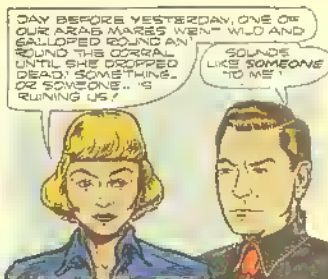
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MISS! IT'S ONLY A BROKEN LEG! RUP HAS GONE FOR THE DOCTOR!

IT'S JUST ANOTHER ACCIDENT PAT!

DAD, LET'S SELL! WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS!

YOU MEAN THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE?

YES, THIS IS THE SIXTH TIME! EVERY MAN ON THE RANCH HAS FALLEN! OUR HORSES SEEM TO BE GOING CRAZY!



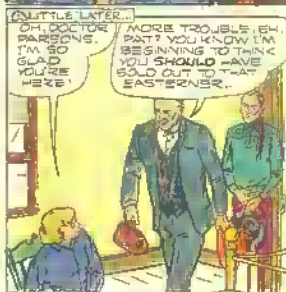
DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, ONE OF OUR ARAB MARES WENT WILD AND GALLOPED ROUND AN' ROUND THE CORRAL UNTIL SHE DROPPED DEAD! SOMETHING, OR SOMEONE.. 'S RUININ' US!

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE TO ME!



IF WE JUST KNEW HOW TO FIGHT IT OUR HANDS ARE SAYIN' THE PLACE IS 'JAXED'!

I DON'T BELIEVE IN JINXES!



A LITTLE LATER...

OH, DOCTOR PARSONS. I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

MORE TROUBLE, EH, PAT? YOU KNOW I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE SOLD OUT TO THAT EASTERNER..



HE'LL BE FINE, PAT. BUT HE MUST BE KEPT QUIET SO THAT HIS LEG WILL MEND QUICKLY! I'LL DROP IN TOMORROW!

THANKS, DOCTOR PARSONS!



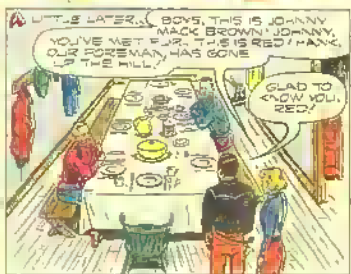
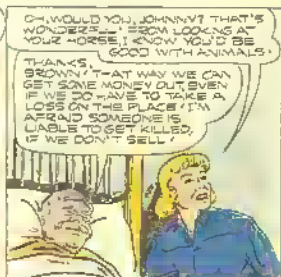
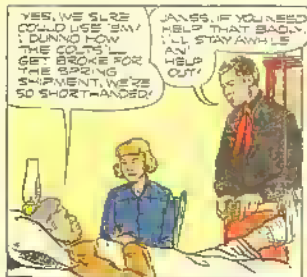
I'LL BE GETTIN' BACK TO WORK! THAT FENCE HAS GOTTA BE MENDED!

FINE, FLIP!

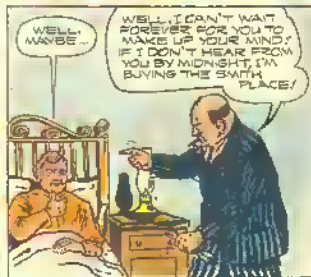
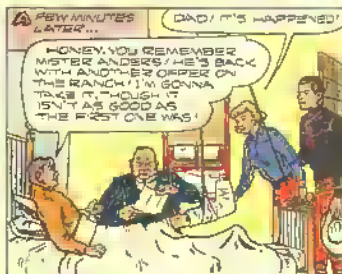
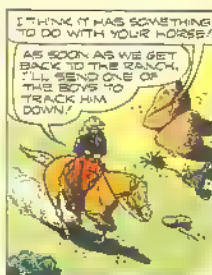
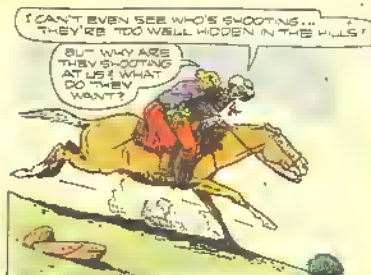


FLIP ISN'T A REGULAR COW-POKE, IS HE?

NO, NOT REALLY. HE'S AN EX-JOCKEY FROM AN EASTERN TRACK! HE CERTAINLY KNOWS HORSES, THOUGH! I WISH WE HAD MORE HANDS LIKE HIM!

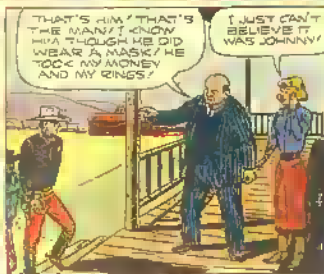
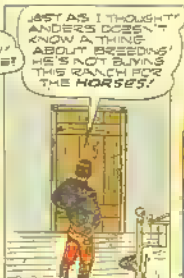








WELL, UM... CERTAINLY! WHAT ELSE?

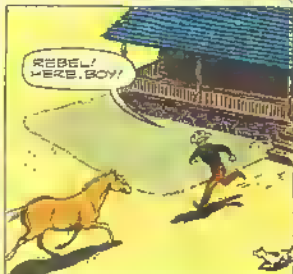




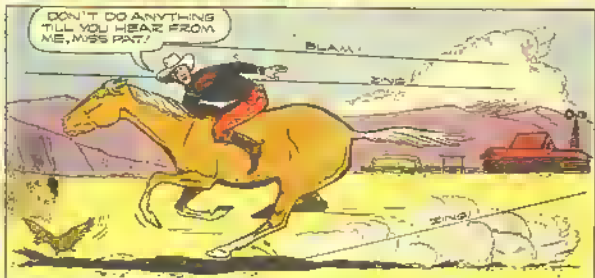
AND THIS TAKES CARE OF YOU,
FLIP!



REBEL!
HERE, BOY!



DON'T DO ANYTHING
TILL YOU HEAR FROM
ME, MISS PAT!



HE'S OUT OF
RANGE NOW.
LET'S GO GET
HIM!

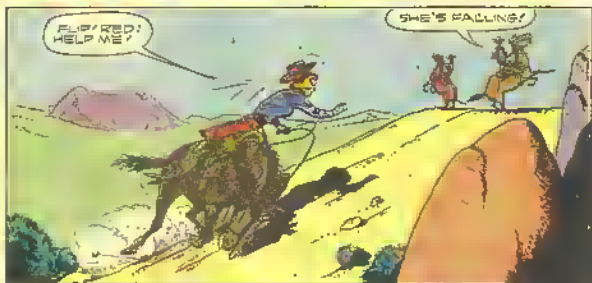
I'M
COMING,
TOO!

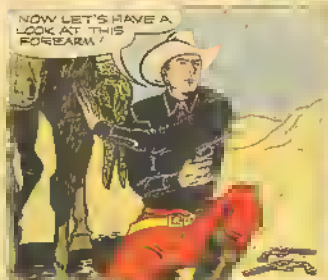


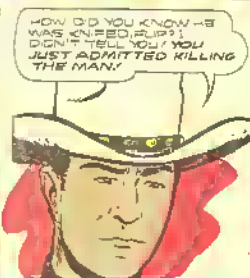
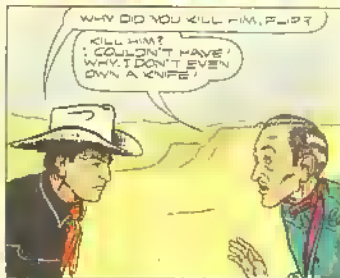
YOU CAN'T GO
WITH THEM, MISS!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!

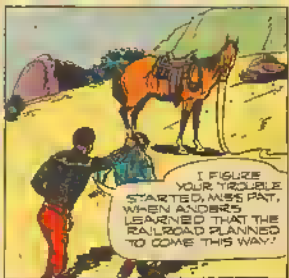
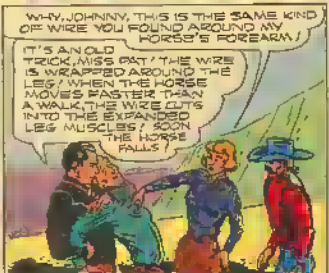
I DON'T CARE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE
JOHNNY IS
GUILTY! I'VE
GOT TO FIND
OUT FOR MYSELF!











SINCE THIS VALLEY IS THE ONLY LOGICAL ROUTE, HE KNEW HE COULD DEMAND A TREMENDOUS PRICE FOR IT, ONCE HE OWNED IT! SO HE HIRED FLIP.



FLIP PULLED ALL THE NASTY LITTLE TRICKS TO MAKE YOUR RANCH SEEM JINXED... MAKING IT EASY FOR ANDERS TO BUY THE SPREAD CHEAPLY!

NOW, WHERE'S THE BODY, FLIP?

N DRAW CANYON! ANDERS MADE ME. HE SAID HE'D TELL JANS!



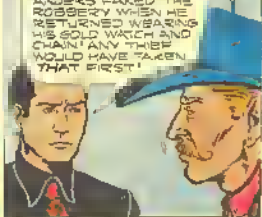
WHY YOU DIRTY, SNEAKIN'!

WAIT A MINUTE! STOP, RED! FLIP ALSO PALMED THAT ROLL OF BILLS ON ME!



YOU MEAN YOU DIDN'T TAKE THAT MONEY?

COURSE NOT, RED! IT WAS OBVIOUS ANDERS FAKED THE ROBBERY WHEN HE RETURNED WEARING HIS GOLD WATCH AND CHAIN! ANY THIEF WOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT FIRST!



AND HE WANTED YOU OUT OF THE WAY, JOHNNY, CAUSE HE WAS AFRAID YOU'D KEEP US FROM SELLING!

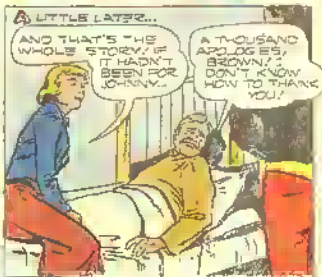
RIGHT, PAT! ALSO HE HAD FLIP KILL THE RAILROAD SURVEYOR BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID THE RAILROAD WOULD COME TO YOU BEFORE HE COULD BUY THE RANCH!



JOHNNY, ANDERS IS WITH FATHER NOW! LET'S GET BACK!

RED, YOU BRING FLIP IN! YOU RIDE, AND MAKE HIM WALK!







When the two reflections fell across the swirling river water, Ned looked up in surprise. Two men, both dark and sour-faced—probably brothers—sat motionless in their saddles, staring down at him from the riverbank.

"Howdy!" the tallest of the pair called out, "Pannin' for gold?"

Ned straightened up and turned around. The strangers' horses, he noted instantly, were streaked with sweat and mottled with dust. The shorter of the men had his right thumb hooked in his gun belt, near the holster. The other glared impatiently, then tried again.

"Any luck, old-timer?"

Ned's wrinkled face remained impassive, but his eyes roamed over every inch of the men, their horses, their equipment.

Suddenly his eyes opened wide. Then, just as quickly, they crinkled back into their usual squint.

"WELL?" the tall stranger's smile evaporated in a surge of rage. "Speak up, you old fool!" he shouted, his right hand fingering his gun butt. "Answer me!"

Ned's face was expressionless.

The tall stranger leaned forward in his saddle and whipped out his gun. "All right!" he yelled down at Ned. "I'm through playin' nicey-nicey!"

Deliberately, he thumbed back the hammer of his six-shooter and aimed down at Ned. "I just want you to tell me one thing! And, if you don't—" He left the sentence hanging in mid-air, punctuated by a wave of his gun.

"Now tell me, you old geezer," he said softly, stressing every word. "IS THIS THE TRAIL TO THE BORDER?"

Ned stared at him, then pulled a

sand-smeared plug of tobacco from his shirt pocket. Biting off a small hunk, he replaced the plug. Then he stared back up at the man, chewing calmly.

The tall stranger's lips tightened, white with anger. He raised his gun abruptly, pulling down on Ned with a slow, steady malron. "I'm goin' to KILL you, old man," he declared through clenched teeth.

"Wait, Deuce!" the other man shouted. "WAIT!"

"What for?" his companion asked, without taking his eyes off Ned. "I'm mad! KILLIN' mad!"

"Maybe he can't talk, Deuce! Maybe he can't even hear!" The shorter man snorted. "Sure looks deal and dumb to me!"

The tall stranger hesitated. He glared down at Ned for a moment.

"We're in enough trouble already, Deuce!" the other persisted. "Don't make it any worse! Come on!"

Slowly, reluctantly, the tall man put his gun away. "You're lucky, Mister," he growled at Ned, "MIGHTY lucky!" Turning to the other man, he spurred his horse. "Let's go!"

Ned stood peering after them as they rode down the steep trail toward the valley beyond. Then, after a good five minutes, he went back to work.

He was still there when Sheriff Jim Weston rode up late that afternoon, followed by a posse of almost a dozen men. "Hi, Ned!" the Sheriff yelled cordially as they all drew up at the riverbank.

Ned nodded silently, by way of greeting, waved at the posse and sloshed over to the edge of the river. He stood there, waiting.

"I know it's no use tryin' to chew the

cud with you, Ned!" the Sheriff grinned. "Talkin' to you is always like talkin' to an adobe wall!"

His grin faded. "Hate to tell you this—but your old prospectin' pal, Lefty Dawson, is dead! Murdered! Shot in the back!"

Ned moved his head to aim a stream of tobacco juice into the river, then turned back, his face still expressionless.

"I know how you must feel," the Sheriff continued, "'couse I know how close you two've been nigh onto thirty years! And, Ned, I just want to say—" The Sheriff choked up, then pulled at his nose.

When he spoke again, his voice was determinedly rough and official. "But we know who it was, Ned—them Borker brothers! Deuce and Lafe Borker! One of 'em dropped a letter out of his pocket!" The Sheriff jerked at his gun belt. "So don't worry—we'll get 'em! They got about five hours' start, but—"

He broke off, following Ned's eyes. "What? Oh! I get it—those tracks! The Borkers've been here! They must've gone on down this trail!"

No one spoke for a few minutes. Then the Sheriff said softly, "The Forks, Ned—did you tell 'em which trail to take there?"

Before the old man could reply, one of the posse yelled over. "Whot Forks, Sheriff?"

"The Forks at Dry Run," the Sheriff

answered, still watching Ned. "One trail," he explained, "goes across the border, to Mexico. The other one hasn't been used for years. Used to go right through a swamp—only the swamp took over. Now, that trail goes through the worst quicksand swamp in Texas—and you'd never know it!"

He raised his voice. "DID YOU, Ned—did you tell 'em which trail to take? If you sent 'em into that quicksand, it's MURDER!"

Ned held up a gnarled hand. "Thought I was deaf and dumb, they did!" His voice was hoarse and cracked.

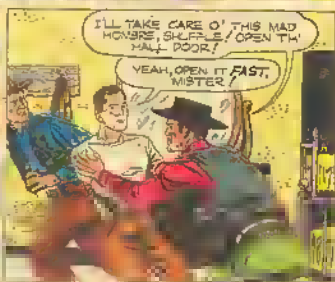
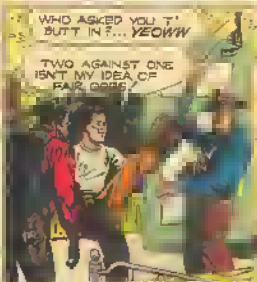
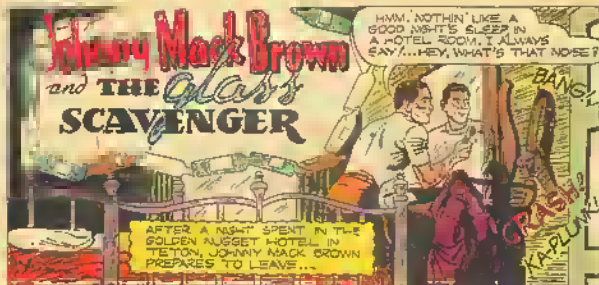
"The toll one," he declared slowly, jaw muscles pulled tight, "was wearin' Lefty's ring! And I knew Lefty wouldn't give up that there ring of his'n—less he was plumb dead!"

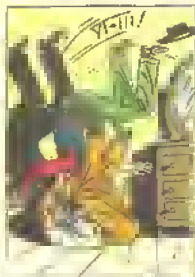
Ned looked straight into the Sheriff's eyes. "No, I didn't send 'em into the quicksand—and I didn't send 'em to Mexico. I didn't tell 'em WHICH trail to take!"

He smiled gently. "Lefty was my only friend on this earth. But there's a bigger Judge out here in the mountains, Sheriff—bigger'n me, or your badge, or your town judge. He already decided which trail them varmints would take at Dry Run!"

Ned scratched at the back of his neck. "You can go see for yourself, Sheriff. But me, I'm sure! I just KNOW which trail them killers took—AND IT WAIN'T TO MEXICO!"







AND HAVE YOU LOST THE MAP?

OF COURSE NOT! I THOUGHT
I HEARD SOMEONE TRYING
TO GET INTO MY ROOM
LAST NIGH' SO I HID
THE MAP IN A BOTTLE!
LOOK OVER HERE.

THEN, I TIED A
STRING AROUND IT AND
LOWERED IT ONTO A PILE
OF EMPTY BOTTLES BE-
HIND THE SALOON DOWN-
STAIRS, JUST BELOW MY
WINDOW!

WHAT PILE OF OLD
BOTTLES, DARWIN?

HUH? GREAT SCOTT.
ALL THE BOTTLES
HAVE DISAPPEARED!

MINUTES LATER...

WHAT HAPPENED TO TH' BOTTLES?
WAL, IF IT'S ANYBODY'S BUSINESS,
A JUNK MAN COMES BY EVERY
MORN'N' AN' CARTS 'EM AWAY!
I'M DOGSONE GLAD T' GET
RID OF 'EM!

WHERE DOES
HE TAKE THE
BOTTLES,
BARKER?

AW, TH' OLD COOT'S.
BUILDS' HISSSELF A BOTTLE
HOUSE OUT ON TH' DESERT
ABOUT FIVE MILES FROM
HERE. I'VE TECHED IN TH'
HEAD, IF YOU ASK ME!

G'MON, DARWIN. LET'S GO OUT
AN' SEE THIS BOTTLE
SCAVENGER!

DID YAH HEAR THAT, CARP?

PRETTY
CLEVER! BUT
WE'LL TAKE A
SHORT CUT AN'
GET TO TH' BOTTLE HOUSE
FIRST!

DARWIN MUST'VE
HAD TH' MAP IN A
BOTTLE!

AS JOHNNY AND DARWIN RIDE ACROSS
THE BLEAK BADLANDS...

HOW LONG HAD YOUR
BROTHER, CACTUS CHARLIE,
PROSPECTED FOR GOLD, DARWIN?

THE FOOL SEARCHED
ALL HIS LIFE, BROWN!
HE WANTED ME TO
SPLSSTAKE HIM ON
HIS LAST VENTURE.
BUT I REFUSED!

AND NOW YOU FALL
HER TO THE WHOLE
SHEBANG, INSTEAD OF
JUST ONE HALF!

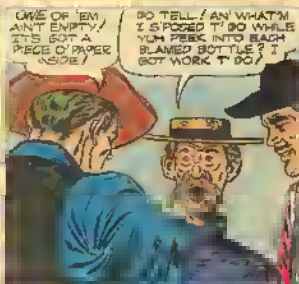
NATURALLY/IM
HIS ONLY LIV-
ING KN/ BELIEVE
ME, I'LL PUT THE
EARNINGS TO GOOD
USE/ CHARLIE AL-
WAYS WAS STUPID
WHEN IT CAME TO
HANDLING
MONEY!

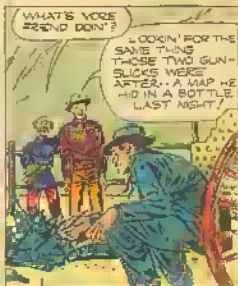
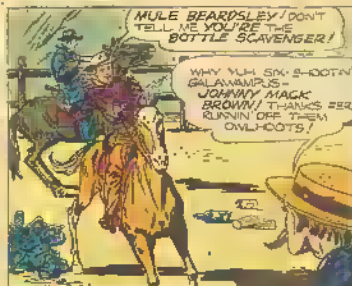
MEANWHILE, UP AHEAD...

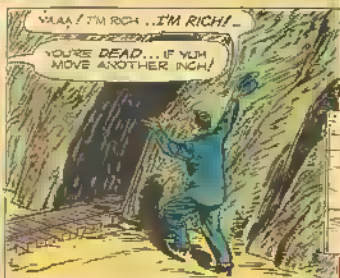
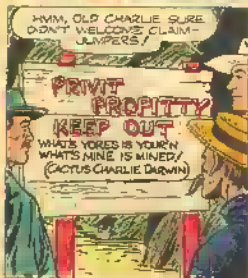
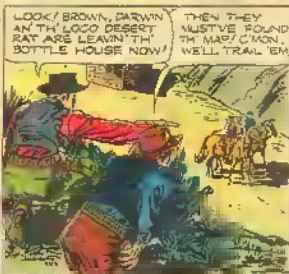
LOOK! THERE'S TH' CRAZY BOTTLE
HOUSE, SHUFFLE!

YEAH, AN' TH'
OLD GEEZER'S
ALREADY GOT HIS
WAGON UNLOADED!

WELL, ROSEBLOD, RECKON I BETTER START
SORTIN' OUT THIS LAST LOAD O' BOTTLES!
I GOT ENOUGH HERE T' FINISH TH' NORTH
WALL--AFTER I MIX UP SOME ADOBE!
YESSZ, SOMBODY, PEOPLE'LL PAY
REAL MONEY T' SEE MY
GLASS HOUSE!







KEEP 'EM COVERED, SHUFFLE, WHILE I
HAVE A LOOK INSIDE TH' MINE! IF THERE'S
SIGN OF GOLD, WE'LL GET 'EM PRONTO!

YOU CAN'T JUMP THIS CLAM,
CARP HAGEN! BY LAW, IT BE-
LONGS TO DARWIN HERE, AND
HE CAN PROVE IT!

SQUIT UP, BROWN! CARP KILLED
CACTUS CHARLIE AN' HE CAN DO
TH' SAME TO TH' REST OF US KIV!



HEY THIS MINES A
FAKE / THERE AINT
NO SIGN OF IT BEN
WORKED BY...



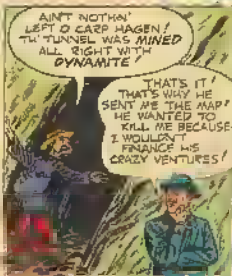
HE'S DEAD / THE
MINE WAS RIGGED
T' BLOW UP THE
FIRST PERSON
TO GO IN!

SOMETHIN'
TELLS ME
CACTUS
CHARLIE FIGURED
OUT A PLOT TO
KILL HIS OWN
BROTHER!



AIN'T NOTHIN'
LEFT O CARP HAGEN!
TH' TUNNEL WAS MINED
ALL RIGHT WITH
DYNAMITE!

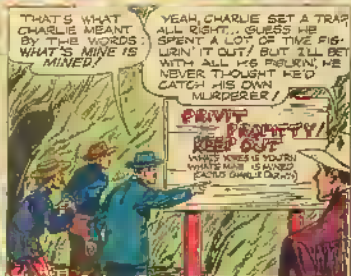
THAT'S IT!
THAT'S WHY HE
SENT ME THE MAP!
HE WANTED TO
KILL ME BECAUSE
I WOULDN'T
FINANCE HIS
CRAZY VENTURES!



THAT'S WHAT
CHARLIE MEANT
BY THE WORDS:
WHAT'S MINE IS
MINED!

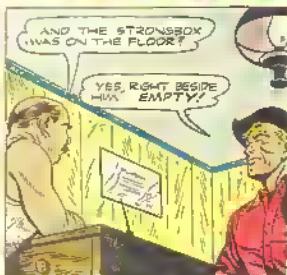
YEAH, CHARLIE SET A TRAP!
ALL RIGHT... GUESS HE
SPENT A LOT OF TIME FIG-
URIN' IT OUT! BUT I'LL BET
WITH ALL US BURNIN', HE
NEVER THOUGHT HE'D
CATCH HIS OWN
MURDERER!

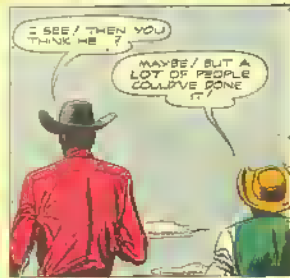
PRIVATE
PROPERTY!
KEEP OUT
WHAT KID'S IS YOURN
WHATE NAME IS MINED
(CACTUS CHARLIE DUNN)

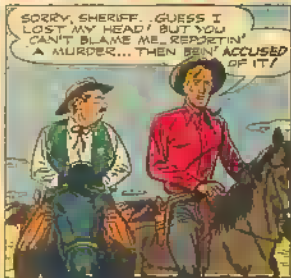
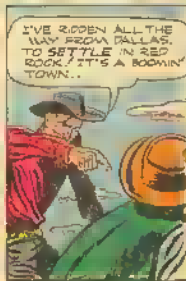


MURDER IN THE DARK

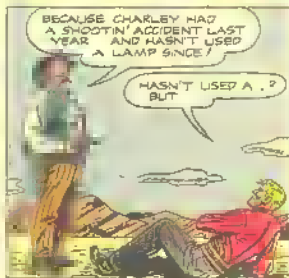
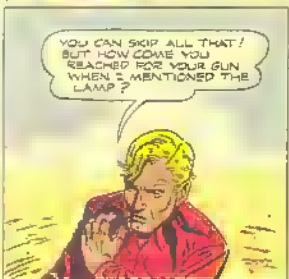
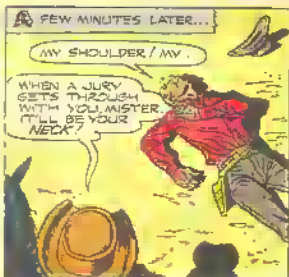














The Prospector's Burro

PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE PROSPECTORS OR OLD-TIME 'DESERT RATS,' WHO ROAM THE WILD AND DESOLATE COUNTRY OF THE SOUTHWEST IN SEARCH OF GOLD OR OTHER PRECIOUS MINERALS, USE BURROS FOR PACK ANIMALS. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY SUITED FOR THIS PURPOSE. THE BURRO IS AN EXTREMELY HARDY ANIMAL. HE IS CAPABLE OF TRAVELING

GREAT DISTANCES WITHOUT WATER AND WILL THRIVE ON THE SCANTY DESERT VEGETATION WHERE A HORSE WOULD STARVE TO DEATH. HE CAN CARRY HUGE LOADS AND NEVER SEEMS TO TIRE. THE BURRO'S HOOF'S ARE HARD AND HE DOES NOT REQUIRE SHOEING, EVEN WHEN GOING THROUGH MALPAI OR LAVA ROCK. AND THE BURRO IS A FAITHFUL ANIMAL. HE SELDOM NEEDS TO BE HGBLED OR TIED UP WHEN CAMP IS MADE. HE CAN BE TURNED LOOSE TO GRAZE AND HE ALWAYS RETURNS TO CAMP, ESPECIALLY IF HE IS GIVEN A HANDFUL OF BARLEY WHEN TURNED OUT. MOST BURROS ARE NOT VERY BIG, USUALLY WEIGHING AROUND FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS, BUT OCCASIONALLY

A MUCH LARGER ONE IS FOUND. THESE BIG FELLOWS MAKE FINE SADDLE ANIMALS. THE BURRO HAS A SMOOTH, EASY GAIT. THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF WILD BURROS ROAMING THE DESERT TO THE SOUTH OF DEATH VALLEY.



